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STEVE'S SIDELIGHTS
By Steve Beverly

TED TURNER'S NWA

Just as I was finishing my "SUMMER SLAM isn't all that hot" column, the big story finally comes to pass.

By the time you read this, an agreement in principle will likely have been signed for Ted Turner's purchase of the National Wrestling Alliance, which basically includes the assets of Jim Crockett Promotions, Inc.

Dealings were finally placed in the hands of attorneys last week and---as one source told us, "The Crocketts, frankly, had no choice financially."

At press time, we could not determine an official takeover date for Turner, but let me run down what MATWATCH has learned:

---Thursday, Friday, and on through the weekend, Ted Turner himself was conducting personal interviews with each of the NWA wrestlers. Dusty Rhodes and Ric Flair were interviewed separately Friday afternoon.

---TBS exec Jack Petrik will oversee the operation. Whether Jim Crockett will be retained as a consultant or in any role is still unclear, but he is not expected to continue as g.m. of the company as originally rumored.

---As for defections in the wake of the sale, one insider told me, "That would be the wrestlers' loss, certainly, because they're going to find this is going to be a first-class organization."

---Changes will be made in the NWA product and probably personnel but they will be made carefully and subtly, not abruptly as when Vince McMahon assumed the SuperStation time periods in 1984. "The fact that Turner is personally talking to these guys is an indication he's serious about the right decisions being made," MATWATCH was told by a source close to the situation.

---The full weight of the Turner organization will be placed behind the NWA, including syndication, marketing (Turner has just begun a new marketing company for the MGM film library), home video, pay-per-view, and production. They want the wrestlers over as celebrities and we were told "first-class media professionals" will be handling this.

It is much too early to speculate on specific changes. I do know the TBS people are high on the talents of Jim Ross as an announcer and that's a plus. I also believe it may take as long as 60-90 days before significant changes may be evident on the air. These people want to make sure they do things right when they make changes. The fact that Ted is talking to the personnel first leads me to believe he has the workers' interests at heart before the organizational shifts are made.

Further, Ted Turner did not get to where he is in broadcasting by being a fool. He's a risktaker and the fact that a number of people are calling this a foolish investment is one of the best elements to this deal, in my view. WTBS became a SuperStation when people told Turner he couldn't put a local station on a satellite. He created a 24-hour news network with an idea and $20 million and look where CNN rests today. So, telling Turner this is a bad move is, in historic precedent, a forerunner of better days ahead for the NWA, though I believe it will take careful and deliberate study to position it properly.

What would I personally like to see? I've about burned out discussing the personnel rearrangements I'd recommend---most of you have read them. But I would first go to work on revitalizing the Saturday TBS show, which should be the flagship program on cable TV. I'd like to see TBS reestablish relationships with key independent promoters (yes, including the CWF and Memphis) and work some financial incentives to bring outside wrestlers in for guest shots on both the Saturday show and the PPV cards.

I'd like to see the wrestlers paid better, on time and on a competitive basis with the WWF. Plus, I'd make the NWA MAIN EVENT the show we'd been promised it would be. Inside sources have told me after the dynamite premiere show, MAIN EVENT has soured because Dusty was opposed to having a hot weekly show and has basically tried to kill it. He's succeeded.

When 40,000 people send in ballots for a DREAM MATCH sweepstakes, I'd like to see some Dream Matches delivered, unlike what we were denied this spring. Do you realize we never saw one dream match? And what do you think the Crocketts did with the ballots? We're told they burned them, rather than holding onto what would have been a valuable marketing mailing list. I don't think Turner's excellent marketing specialists will make that mistake.

If handled properly, I expect a professional media product in the new Ted Turner NWA that one year from

now will probably be nothing like what we see today. I believe the term "wrestling" will be respected and the athleticism of the work will be emphasized. Plus, I have long admired Turner's ability to sell people on his concepts and---at some point---I would think the new NWA will be an organization in which wrestlers will be anxious to work.

One Atlanta insider told me Friday, "This is not good news for Vince McMahon." It may be a bit early to wave that banner as Vince is certainly not in danger of missing any meals. But I do believe he will soon have a quality competitor on his hands and that is only good news for all of us.

COMINGS & GOINGS

---SUMMER SLAM PREDICTIONS: Hogan/Savage will beat Andre/DiBiase but Jesse will maintain his heel image (he has to for the broadcast rivalry with Vince); Demolition will keep the tag belts with Jimmy Hart's help; Honky Tonk Man will no doubt retain the I-C title because SUPERSTARS angles are already shot for a Honky/Anabolic Warrior title feud (is there no sanity?).

---Another slick one for Vince: just as it seemed Survivor Series II would face PPV competition Thanksgiving night from the Leonard-Lalonde fight, the WWF has agreed to handle PPV marketing for the bout. So Sugar Ray moves to Nov. 7 and Vince makes a ton off of him.

---The Southern tag belts have been held up. Joey Maggs has been subbing for the injured Steve Prichard as Tommy Rich's partner. The holdup is over a match to be shown this weekend between Rich/Maggs and the M.O.D. Squad. Also, the Moondog has won the Southern heavyweight title from Chris Adams in a ripoff job.

---Not enough closeups and reaction time on the CWF angle where Alan Martin kisses Missy Hyatt. But the Part II were Eddie Gilbert takes a "so what" attitude is priceless and Charlie Platt gives one of his best deadpan performances ever, in the tradition of classic Gordon Solie takes.

---Dan Wolfe of FNN/SCORE says the CWF will be back Sunday night at 8 (EDT) and will be in a floating time period for at least a month.

---SCORE is close to a deal with Jay French and Bob Geigel to air a new USA Wrestling show with Central States stars. Geigel is said to be promising an arrangement with Shohei Baba to air one weekly All-Japan match.

---Wolfe also tells me he's trying to put together a one-hour Bruiser Brody retrospective. He adds that the recent CWF preemptions drew twice as many protests as the Memphis interruptions.

---Mizlou (the el cheapo bowl syndicator) plans a sports cable service to start in April. Vic Piano of Mizlou plans on wrestling, but I don't know who's left for him to get.

---The Lawler-Hennig AWA rematch two Saturdays ago was the best ESPN match since Hennig-Bockwinkel in December 1986. Too bad the commentary wasn't half as good.

---I'm told the FLORIDA CHAMPIONSHIP shows are improving, but the last two I saw were SLOOOOW, reminiscent of Gordon Solie's '60s Tampa show. Gordon was fine but the pacing was deadly and Gordon's son Jonard is badly miscast as color man.

---Deep South Wrestling is still around. They're doing a tie-in to the Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon. Ray (Kareem Muhammad/Blackstud Williams) has joined them as Kareem. Wonder if he knows who he is when he wakes up every day?

---Expect major changes on a current TV wrestling program (for the better) this fall.

---Brad Armstrong/Tim Horner said to be hiring an attorney to get about $24,000 each still owed by Crockett. I've been asked why others haven't gone to court. I can't believe fear of blackball is why because so many promoters hate Crockett. Perhaps some know they can't go to the WWF and can't afford to work an indie.

---One source I have much faith in has told me Brother Love's guest "could be any of 12 of Crockett's guys if the right deal is made," but with the Turner purchase, let's wait and see. I still think this could be as big a letdown as the crowning of King Haku.

---Arn Anderson reportedly told Armstrong in a dressing room last week he has "had it," and is actively negotiating with Vince.

---Part of the reason for Robert Gibson's departure from the NWA: one report has him being told to drive to house shows while others fly.

---The WWF drew only 760 for a Montgomery AL card on 8/13. The next night, CWF pulled a full house 2,700 at the Civic Center for TV tapings.

---Now definites for the 10-man CWF title tourney: Chris Adams, Tommy Rich, Bob Orton Jr. That's added to Gilbert, Idol, Bullet, and Doug Furnas. Terry Gordy is being called a "strong maybe." A Lawler-Bam Bam Bigelow AWA title match tops the card, along with the Ken Wayne-Danny Davis hair vs hair clash.

---Finally, one of the fine TV wrestling announcers has passed away. Jim Carlisle, who did Fred Ward's Georgia matches from 1969-84, died of cancer Aug. 14 in Columbus GA. I'll offer an I REMEMBER... tribute to Jim next week in MATWATCH.

YOU ASKED FOR IT...

Interesting questions with your subscription forms this month. Here's a sampling from the mailbag:

Q: Why did Joe Pedicino stop airing NWA matches on PRO WRESTLING THIS WEEK?

A: Not Joe's choice. Last summer, PWTW joined the AWA and POWW in the All-Star Wrestling Network (a syndication group which aids clearances and ad sales). A separate firm, U.S. Marketing, Inc., tried to arrange a different deal for Tribune Broadcasting---a "new AWA," for which Ric Flair and The Road Warriors were approached. Despite the interceding efforts of key insiders, Crockett erroneously assumed Pedicino was behind the Tribune deal and pulled his clips from PWTW. Most insiders believe Crockett came out the loser because the WWF still readily shares footage with Pedicino.

Q: Where is Paul Orndorff and what is he doing these days?

A: Rumors of Orndorff's death are as rabid as those that Elvis Is Alive. Mr. Wonderful lives in the Atlanta area, tending to his business interests, including a bowling center.

Q: Why did Ole Anderson leave the NWA after just two months earlier this year?

A: That's a well-kept secret. Ole's living in the Atlanta area and he's reportedly been in contact with a number of wrestlers about starting up a new group, perhaps in 1989. I doubt Thunderbolt Patterson is one of them. But he's also been mentioned as a possibility to work for Turner's new NWA.

Q: Where are Bill & Randy Mulkey and why did Mulkeymania fade?

A: Not working in pro wrestling. I'm told Dusty squashed them because he felt they were over too big at the Crockett Cup for a cult team. So he shipped them to Florida and let them go when the Florida group was folded.

YOU SAID IT...

Whatever happened to the automatic disqualification for using a chair? That was ridiculous the way Dusty and Dick Murdoch bashed that kid (David Isley) around two weeks ago. Tommy Young just let it happen.

Cal Callaway
Montgomery AL

I love the Continental show now and I think they're really on the right track but what I DON'T like is all too often, they have an angle after EVERY match. Eddie (Gilbert) needs to cut back on the angles. It gets too confusing.

Bruce Snyder
Columbus GA

I've had it with jobbers being treated as The Unknown Opponent. About half the time now, the WWF and NWA either make only casual mention of a jobber or never identify him at all. It's disgusting.

Carlton Clarke
Salisbury MD

Why did you rate the WCW show BOMB-PLUS two weeks ago? I loved seeing those jobbers get a break for a change.

Ann Freeman
Scarsdale NY

(FSB: Ann, I agree that jobber tag match was the best thing on the show, but I think any group such as the NWA should offer the most prominent talent they have on any show. They didn't.)

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MATWATCH SHOPPERS NETWORK

---Correction: my friend Glenn Fox's British wrestling tapes are $30 each, not $10 as I previously stated. They are of first-rate quality!

---Harry White, 1075 McCausland, St. Louis MO 63117, is looking for any '70s tape of Jack Brisco, Dory Funk Jr., or Gene Kiniski.

---Glenn Fox's address: 432 Dewey Place East, Seattle WA 98112.

TV TEMPO (Weekend of August 19-21)

RATING KEY: PINFALL! - Must See. PILEDRIVER - Excellent. POWERSLAM - Good. DRAW - Average. RESTHOLD - Fair. BOMB - Poor. PLUS is for a midscale rating.

(WWC) - Dutch Mantel drew with Super Black Ninja; Buddy Landel d. TNT; VIDEO: Abdullah the Butcher. RESTHOLD.

(MEMPHIS) - Jerry Lawler d. Keith Eric; Cat Garrett d. The Assassin; Robert Fuller d. Alan Reynolds; Billy Travis/Scott Steiner drew with Phil Hickerson/Brickhouse Brown; Jeff Jarrett d. Gary Young when Brown misses top rope jump and creams Young. ANGLES: Jarrett pulls up Sylvia Fuller's dress and spanks her. Fuller does hot interview decrying Jarrett as a man. POWERSLAM

(CWF) - Detroit Demolition d. Turbo Ted; Shane Douglas DQ over Samoans in CWF tag title handicap match when wild brawl breaks out between D.I./Demolition, Samoans, Douglas/Lord Humongous/Tom Prichard; Tony Anthony d. Lee Peek; Ken Wayne/Nightmare Freddie d. Mike Starr/Rick Hazzard; Danny Davis wins DQ over Bucky Siegler when Ken Wayne interferes...Mr. Olympia tied to ropes by mask laces attempting save, Davis clawed, foams at mouth before Prichard, Willie B. Hert save. ANGLES: Eddie Gilbert says he didn't save wife Missy Hyatt from Alan Martin's kiss because he told her to stay home and cook the meals. Missy says if Eddie won't help, she'll hire someone to handle Martin; Ron West rescinds announced suspension of Gilbert/Paul E. Dangerously at request of Hert. POWERSLAM-PLUS.

(SCW) - Ray Candy wins DQ over M.E.B. in dreadful Body Slam Match when Rama Brown/Steve Lawler run-in; John Michaels-Steve Lawler double DQ; Mr. Wrestling II d. Buck Robley in 2x4 Match but M.E.B./Brown run-in before Ranger Ross saves; M.O.D. Squad d. Ranger Ross/Jim Voss. BOMB-PLUS.

(W. CLASS) - Iceman Parsons d. Jeff Raitz; Steve Simpson d. John Tatum in strap match with wild melee afterward; Eric Embry d. Steve Casey; Samoan Swat Team d. Michael Hayes/Steve Cox. POWERSLAM.

(USA) - No rating. Repeat of the now-defunct promotion's premiere show.

(AWA) - John Paul/Ricky Rice d. Vernon Deaton/Scott Hudson; Jay Strongbow Jr./Wahoo McDaniel d. Greg Robertson/Mike Smani; Soldad Ustinov d. Dennis Stamp; Classic: Nick Bockwinkel d. Billy Robinson; Bad Company wins DQ Mando & Chavo Guerrero but Mando offers one-man tour de force, including Sting-style fly over ropes onto Diamond. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(WWF) - CHALLENGE: Hart Foundation d. Bob Bryant/Al Kirkland; Honky Tonk Man, Rougeau Brothers, Brutus Beefcake, Dino Bravo, Hercules Hernandez win other squashes; Jesse Ventura's jacket grabbed by Andre and stuffed with $$$ by DiBiase in Bro. Love segment. RESTHOLD; ALL-AMERICAN: Rick Rude d. Buck Zumhofe; Terry Taylor d. Lanny Poffo; Randy Savage d. Conquistador #1; Greg Valentine, Tito Santana, British Bulldogs win other squashes. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(PWTW) - WCCW, Kerry-Kimala double COR; FLAIR, Dreammaker d. Blue Maxie; WWC, Youngbloods d. Afa & Sika by DQ; SCW, Rich/Prichard d. Rama Brown/Joel Deaton; CWF, Gilbert/Dangerously attack Burrhead Jones; WWF, SUMMER SLAM update; MEMPHIS, watermelon presentation to Brickhouse Brown; 7UP WRESTLERS OF WEEK: Rich/Prichard. POWERSLAM.

(NWA) - NWA PRO: Midnight Express d. Italian Stallion/Kendall Windham; Brad Armstrong/Tim Horner drew with Sheepherders; Ronnie Garvin d. Larry Stephens; Sting/Nikita Koloff win DQ over Tully & Arn when Barry Windham attacks Sting with the claw and Sting juices him before Nikita saves with chair. POWERSLAM-PLUS...the NWA's best arena show in weeks; Jim Ross great in final match; WORLD WIDE: Ricky Morton, Rick Steiner/Al Perez/Ronnie Garvin (6-man), Midnight Express, Russian Powers of Pain, Dick Murdoch win squashes; Lex Luger/Dusty Rhodes vs. Windham/Flair begins as show ends. Uncle Ivan, Russian A. get into shoving match. BOMB-PLUS. TBS: Sorry, we had massive thunderstorm that knocked out power during most of show; MAIN EVENT: Tim Horner d. Rip Morgan; Kevin Sullivan d. Italian Stallion; Rock & Roll Express d. Sheepherders. DRAW.

LINES OF THE WEEK - 1. Dangerously, CWF: "If you're gonna suspend us, then Hot Stuff Eddie Gilbert is coming right back in here as the Midnight Rider." 2. Pedicino, CWF, to Paul E.: "I don't believe crap like that will be tolerated in the CWF." 3. Gilbert, CWF: "Every red-blooded American male wants to kiss Missy, so I don't blame Alan Martin." 4. Jim Cornette, NWA PRO: "We're Christian athletes...we're sportsmen." 5. Rod Trongard, AWA: "Can you understand what Teijho Khan is saying?" 6. Gene Okerlund, WWF: "Megaref? That's the equivalent of asking Mr. Ventura to play the lead role in THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST."

BLOOPER AWARD - Bob Caudle, NWA Pro, for calling the NWA tag champs Arn and Tully Anderson.

BOO AWARD - (tie) NWA, for starting the main event of World Wide as the show was ending; and AWA, for their eternal teasing of that PPV show.

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